

LHS track to remain unfinished

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By BRENT SHRUM

Western News Reporter

The track at Libby High School won't be finished this year, school officials acknowledged Monday.

Environmental Protection Agency representatives and the contractor working on the track have recommended against moving ahead with the project this fall, district superintendent Kirby Maki told the school board.

A number of parents and school staff members are upset with the delay, but it's not worth the risk to try to finish the job now, Maki said.

"We don't want to jeopardize our track," he said.

The old track was excavated last year so asbestos-contaminated vermiculite could be removed from the soil. The material from the W.R. Grace mine had been used as a track surface in the 1970s.

The track has been paved but the rubber surface has not been installed. The rubber takes five weeks of warm, dry temperatures to cure properly. During that time it can't rain, and the temperatures have to remain above 60 degrees in the day and 40 at night.

There's no chance the temperatures will remain that mild over the next five weeks, board member Don Clark said.

"It isn't going to happen, and we're going to have moisture," he said.

Covering the track while the rubber cures has been considered, but doing that would probably void the warranty because there isn't any way to guarantee that the track won't be disturbed when football games and other events are going on all around it, Maki said.

The asphalt surface of the track will be painted with lines and the track can be used in the spring for practice if not for meets, Maki said.

"It would seem to me it's not ideal, but at least this year we're going to have a running surface to practice on," he said.

Applying the rubber surface to the track is expected to cost more than \$70,000.

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